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ABSTRACT

Ethnographic data on schools are used as the basis for commenting on two issues that concern British educational policy-makers: the crisis of control in the classroom, and the cut-back in initial teacher training. An ethnographic review of classroom control indicates that physical and verbal aggression by students is rare, and that such aggression is less important in the minds of teachers than the routine, minor threats to their control that occur far more frequently. Ethnography identifies teachers' perceptions of classroom control as hinging on student noise and teacher autonomy. Ethnography also shows that beginning teachers derive their knowledge about the job of teaching from their days as students and that training has little long-term impact on teachers' attitudes to classroom control. These findings lend support for either extending the period of training or alleviating new teachers' control anxiety by providing more "on site" experiences or team teaching. Information on the classroom, along with teacher strategies to achieve control and pupil counter-strategies, can be used in teacher training to prepare newcomers to cope with a basic part of their job. (MLF)

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Remedies for Control Problems in the Classroom : the contribution of ethnography for social policy.

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PA 015 659

Paper presented to the 'Social Crisis, Educational Research and Social Policy' conference at Westhill college, Birmingham, January 1983.

Teachers hold a crucial position in the education system, standing at the interface between formal visions of what needs to be accomplished and practical visions of what is feasible under the prevailing circumstances. In a sense they stand between pedagogy and pupil, between theory and practice, acting as a gatekeeper to the pupils' experience of schooling (King 1973). As a result, there is no shortage of advice on what teachers ought to be doing. While politicians and industrialists pontificate on the kind of end-product teachers should be striving to achieve, professional educationists provide the teacher with plans for pedagogic innovation and suggestions on how to do the job effectively. What is remarkable about these deliberations and prescriptions on teacher activity, however, is the relatively little amount of attention given to what the teachers themselves feel about the aims of education and the methods to be employed. What are their priorities and what is their view of the situation? Why do they operate in a particular manner and why do they favour certain approaches?

In light of their crucial position in the system this is surprising to say the least, particularly since innovations and prescriptions are unlikely to have much influence, no matter how ingenious or pedagogically precise, if teachers' current thinking and practice is not taken into consideration as the starting point. Proposed changes, after all, must be based on a realistic appraisal of the situation within which teachers operate and the ways in which teachers understand the circumstances if those proposals are to stand a chance of being accepted by teachers as suitable for implementation in the classroom.

For this reason, ethnography has a vital contribution to make. Its deliberate focus on the experiences of social actors and the meanings they attribute to situations makes it admirably suited to providing foundations for the successful implementation of policy and for guiding the direction in which policy should go. To date, however, ethnographers have been slightly coy about the application of their findings to social policy and have tended to value their work for its contribution to a detailed and accurate picture of social life rather than the suggestions it may contain for changing the situation. This seems a waste in the sense that it does not exploit the full potential of ethnographic research and, incidentally, opens such work to the criticism that it is inherently conservative.

The purpose of this paper is to suggest that ethnographic work can, and perhaps should, be used as a foundation for proposals directly concerned with social policy and social change. To do this, it draws on existing ethnographic data on schools as a basis for commenting on two issues currently exercising the minds of those concerned with educational policy. The first of these is the crisis of control in the classroom, the second is the cut-back in initial teacher training. A brief review of ethnographic work relevant to these issues will be used to illustrate how ethnographic work within the sociology of education might have a direct bearing on policy discussions and proposals.

I

The 'crisis' of control in classrooms is one that is quite durable. At regular intervals it gets resuscitated and pushed to the fore as a major problem facing our schools today. The events of Toxteth and, in particular, the so-called 'riots' at St Saviour's junior school in 1981 coupled with the host of school disturbances that came in its wake, have provided the most recent cause for 'panic' amongst politicians, educationalists and the public at large.

Such a 'crisis of control', I would suggest, does not reflect a temporary scare that is sparked-off by a specific incident but is more accurately conceived as a heightening of an anxiety about classroom control that already exists in the minds of the public. Gallup polls in the United States have shown that parents there regard classroom control as the biggest problem facing schools (Gurwin & Mendler 1980) and in Britain, as well, a public concern with discipline in schools continues to rival questions about curriculum and falling standards of academic achievement for top-spot in the anxiety ratings (Wilson 1981).

Time and again the tabloids and right-wing Press fuel this anxiety with alarmist reports of violence, vandalism and truancy. Professional educationalists and politicians of the right have joined the chorus. Most prominently in the 'Black Papers' (Cox & Dyson 1969a, 1969b, 1970 Cox & Boyson 1975, 1977)[1] we find a concerted attack on comprehensive schools, progressive methods and poor quality teachers as the cause of

not only (alleged) falling academic standards but also rampant indiscipline in the secondary schools. And Wilson's (1981) recent research brings up to date the pervasive image of schools as places where teachers are bullied and intimidated by their teenage pupils to an extent that provokes a call for a general review of discipline in schools and the claim that teachers need specific education about discipline.

Given the level of anxiety that exists about control in classrooms it is hardly surprising that there has been considerable attention given to the problem. Researchers and commentators, adopting a variety of perspectives, have sought to identify the cause of the problem and have frequently suggested remedies for the 'malaise'. These perspectives, in essence, involve the following approaches :

1) psychopathology : where the cause of the problem resides in the pupil(s) and the emotional disturbance the pupil(s) manifests.

2) cultural malaise : where the root of the problem is to be found in the failings of the family or community to provide support for the exercise of authority in schools.

3) [illegible] counter-culture : where resistance to authority in schools involves a conscious reaction against the dominant system at school.

4) crisis of social control : where control problems experienced in schools are seen as symptomatic of a wider legitimation crisis and the impending disintegration of the (capitalist) social formulation.

5) insufficient resources : where disruption is attributed to poor facilities (buildings and equipment) and the need for increased numbers of teachers.

6) poor quality of teachers : inappropriate selection, training and motivation of teachers.

Contained within these approaches are the prospects of making direct, positive recommendations about how to ameliorate or remedy the conditions that give rise to problem of classroom control - if, indeed, it is seen as a problem. Improved resources (point 5), improved contact between school and community, social services, positive discrimination (point 2), behaviour modification, therapy, counselling, special units (point 1), the incorporation of pupil counter-cultures into mainstream school culture (point 3) and the radical revision of social structure (point 4) are obvious suggestions that arise from the variety of perspectives adopted on the 'problem'.

Of particular interest to this paper, however, is the perspective that identifies the quality of teachers as the prime cause of control problems in class. Distinct from the other approaches, there is a deliberate concern with laying blame for the 'educational malaise' with the school and the teachers rather than the pupils or any deprivation experienced outside the school. As Froome put it :

> During the past decade, as complaints of declining attainment, truancy, bad behaviour and violence in schools have been given much publicity, it has become customary to attribute these failings to the effect of children living in inner-city areas where the housing is poor, facilities are sparse and the neighbourhood is termed 'deprived'. (...) However, before attributing all our schooling ills in such

> in such localities to social deprivation, it might be prudent to consider if there are other factors in some of the schools themselves which have contributed to increased juvenile delinquency, truancy and declining standards of scholastic achievements.
> I believe there are.
>
> (Froome 1975 p10)

The editors of the Black Papers, particularly Cox & Boyson in 1975 and 1977, are quite clear about what those 'other factors' might be : comprehensive re-organisation, progressive teaching methods and, significant in terms of the present discussion, the poor quality of teachers.

> Inability to read arises from bad teaching or bad classroom discipline not from deprived home backgrounds
> (Cox & Boyson 1975 pp 3-4)

> there should be more emphasis on the quality of teachers accepted for training, and (...) standards of entry, to the profession should be raised.
> (Cox & Boyson 1977 p9).

> It is the quality of teachers which matters, rather than their numbers or their equipment. We have sacrificed quality for numbers, and the result has been a lowering of standards. (Cox & Boyson 1975 p1).

More recently, the H.M.I's (1982) report 'The New Teacher in the School' has been used to make the same point. The way the findings have been interpreted (albeit a partial and loaded interpretation) is that education is being hampered by inadequate selection and training of teachers. As Christopher Rowlands, education correspondent for the Daily Mail, read the report :

> According to the inspectors who compiled the report, nearly a quarter of newly-qualified teachers are poorly equipped for the jobs they are given to do. They saw teachers facing classes with little or no preparation; teachers at a total loss to meet the differing needs of bright children and slow learners; teachers who set homework but didn't mark it, and teachers who lacked the personality to control boisterous teenagers.
> (Daily Mail : 14/10/82)

Anxiety about classroom control, then, is connected, in part, with the quality of teachers and the effectiveness of their selection and training. Without denying the significnce of the other factors used to explain the causes of control problems in class, there is a clear strand of contemporary thought that (a) sees classroom control as an acute problem and which (b) lays the blame for the problem at the feet of teachers and the system that trains them. In the current context of things like cut-backs in teacher training (and even the use of corporal punishment in schools) this strand of thought has a particular poignancy, of course, and deserves some serious consideration. It should not, indeed cannot, be dismissed at mere political rhetoric because it appears to be lodged in the public's vision of contemporary education and, perhaps even more importantly, because it exists at a level where crucial political/educational decisions are made which shape the future of teaching and teacher training. [2]

The specific purpose of this paper is to bring to bear on the issue evidence drawn from ethnographic research on teachers, teaching and classroom interaction, not only to critically examine the indictment of teachers and teacher training but also, and in its own right, to reinforce the claim that ethnography has considerable potential in matters of policy.

Apart from some notable exceptions[3], there has been little attempt to consider what classroom control means from the teacher's point of view and, whilst there have been more attempts to investigate it from the pupil's perspective, it is fair to say that teachers' understanding of the phenomenon remains largely neglected. Characteristically, writers have tended to assume that what constitutes classroom control is obvious and proceeded to concentrate on the causes and remedies for it.[4]

By its very nature ethnography is not happy to leave teacher (and pupil) perceptions of the phenomenon in such a crude state and ethnographers working in schools have begun to provide data that can furnish us with a basic picture. The picture that we can build-up necessarily draws on some research which was not specifically intended to deal with classroom control but which, nonetheless, covered perceptions, experiences and interactions in the classroom that have relevance for teachers' understanding of classroom control. Combined with research more deliberately focused on classroom control, however, these provide the following ethnographic account of (teachers' understanding) of classroom control.

My own research, reported elsewhere (Denscombe 1977, 1980c, 1982), indicates straight away that, so far as (secondary) teachers are concerned, classroom control is an elementary part of their job. It is elementary in the sense of being the first thing on which their competence is judged and it is elementary, as well, in the sense that it is a basic pre-condition for success as a teacher. There can be little doubt, in fact, that teachers see classroom control as a necessary

(though not sufficient) condition for putting over the subject content of a lesson. In their eyes

> The teacher who has "lost control" of his class, as the expression goes, cannot compensate for that deficiency by doing an especially good job of evaluation or by spending extra time with his remedial reading group. In an educational sense, when group control is lost, all is lost.
>
> (Jackson 1968 p.106)

It is also clear that the teachers' concern with control is not entirely the product of free-choice on their part. Despite pedagogic preferences that might be possible in the ideal-world, the real-world of teaching places severe constraints on the extent to which teachers perceive themselves at liberty to disregard this feature of the job.
There are i) legal obligations and ii) directives from the local education authority as well as a variety of less formal expectations from iii) colleagues, iv) pupils and v) the school organisation which reinforce the teacher's expectation that classroom control is an essential part of the job.

Historical evidence is interesting on this point as well because it suggests that teachers' concern with classroom control is not simply a response to recent events and circumstances. Humphries (1981) and Grace (1978) both indicate that control has been a problem - sometimes quite severe - even in the last century. Humphries, in particular, uses evidence drawn from interviews with elderly people about their school experience, in his own words, to

> challenge the popular stereotype and academic orthodoxy that portrays pupils in the pre-1939 period as disciplined, conformist and submissive to school authority (... and to ...) expose this misleading stereotype by tracing the extensive nature of pupil opposition to provided schooling.

His evidence of severe disruption during the period 1889-1939 does not depend purely on oral history, however, which might, after all, be prone to selective and exaggerated recollection. Punishment books of the time, and Press reports of school strikes, provide documentary support for the idea that control has long been a problem in schools.

In the United States, similarly, control difficulties have a long history. As Swift (1971) points out, as far back as 1837 in Massachusetts, over 300 schools were broken up by rebellious pupils (i.e. 10% of the state's schools). Apart from breaking up the premises, he points out, the records indicate two other serious kinds of misbehaviour - locking the teacher out of the school or classroom, and assaulting the teacher - either of which could lead to the teacher being dismissed. Teachers, under these circumstances, survived on their ability to maintain order not on their scholastic excellence.

This kind of information should make us wary about getting caught up in any 'hysterical' responses to a 'new crisis' of classroom control. It does not 'prove' that things have always been the same because objective, quantifiable measures of disruptive behaviour are practically impossible to achieve[5] but it does warn us against a blind acceptance of the 'common-sense' truth that control problems are worse than they used to be.

From the teachers' point of view the <u>severity</u> of the problem of classroom control will depend on a variety of factors. The motivation of the pupils in the school or class, the time of day, week or term, the weather, subject of the lesson, each can affect the severity of the problem. The severity of the problem, in terms of the extent to which

individual teachers experience control difficulties, is, in this sense, localized because not all teachers face the same problem.

Following the point, it is worth noting that the great majority of teachers work in schools where control would not appear to be a desperate problem. As the H.M.I. (1979) conclude having investigated 384 secondary schools, it was only in 6% of cases that indiscipline could be seen as a 'considerable problem' and in less than 1% of the schools was it a a 'serious problem'.

Having said this, it is also true that, as teachers see it, the problem of classroom control is not limited to particular times and particular places. The problem is actually a routine one facing most teachers in most lessons even though it clearly becomes more acute under certain circumstances. This feature of teachers' understanding of classroom control is worth emphasising. From their point of view, the problem is not restricted to the explosive instances that occur occasionally - the serious incidents involving violence or extreme verbal abuse. What troubles teachers more are the minor irritation, the minor challenges to their authority that occur as a routine feature of lessons.

This says something about the nature of the 'control problem' as a phenomenon. As Boyson, an unlikely ally in this context, suggests :

> It is possible that it is not the figures for violence and arson which are the greatest threat to schools but the lesson resisters of the classroom. A teacher can be undermined as efficiently by dumb insolence, time wasting and non-cooperation of pupils as by physical threats or obsene insults.
>
> (Boyson 1975 p.13)

Certainly, what evidence there is supports the view that teachers see the problem of control as one that centres on the lesser forms of threat posed by pupils - threats to orderliness in the classroom rather than threats against the teacher as a person. The reason for this, it seems, is not that phsyical assault, arson and vandalism are regarded in their own right as trivial but that they occur quite rarely in comparison with the less extreme forms of disruption. This point emerged from the research of Lawrence et al (1977) in a London comprehensive school where they tried to gauge the extent of, and nature of, disruptive behaviour during two one-week periods - the first in November 1976, the second in February 1977. Thirty six of the teachers were asked to write 'reports' on disruptive incidents that were subsequently followed-up by interviews to clarify the nature of the event. During the two weeks, 101 incidents were reported by teachers of which only, 9 could be categorized as 'very serious'. Lawrence et al admit to some surprise about this since in their definition of 'disruptive behaviour' as 'behaviour which seriously interrupts the teaching process and/or seriously interferes with the running of the school (p6,11) they originally had in mind the more extreme cases of disruption like 'physical attacks' and the 'malicious destruction of property'. As it became evident, the teachers were anxious to include boisterousness and minor infrigements of rules since these were the prevalent form of control problem they experienced as teachers.

The idea that extreme forms of disruption are quite rare is something that clearly goes against the grain so far as the general impression fostered by the media and press is concerned. Yet when serious investigations have been undertaken the rareness of such events is a

common finding (Laslett 1977). Mills (1976), for instance, on the basis of extensive research on 13-16 year old pupils in a midlands local education authority found that the chances of a teacher being assaulted were very low[6] and that within the area there appeared to be a hard-core of only about 3% of this age-range who could be identified as 'seriously disruptive children'. And Dierenfield (1982), surveying the opinions of 465 comprehensive school teachers in 41 local education authorities, found that none felt disruption in their school to be 'totally out of hand' and only 3.6% regarded it as a 'severe situation'. The vast majority (67.8%) felt it to be 'a problem but one with which it is possible to cope'. It is also interesting to note the types of behaviour experienced by the respondents as having a 'serious effect on reasonable order' in their school. Only 23.6% cited 'physical violence on the teacher, 21.9% abusive talk to the teacher, 19.7% physical violence to other pupils'.

These, and a range of findings on teachers' opinions on control, led Dierenfield to argue that

> The most important conclusion to be drawn from the data gathered in this study is that the people most directly concerned with disruptive behaviour in comprehensive schools, the teachers and heads, are convinced that classroom discipline is a serious, but not critical problem. (...) Teachers and heads in comprehensive schools look upon classroom disruption as a serious problem but believe it can be handled by emphasizing several standard procedures available to every school.

To summarize, then, the problem of control is not as severe as impression held by the public and portrayed by the media. From the teachers' point of view, incidents of extreme disruption are relatively rare and it

is the more mundane, everyday threats to their control which occur far more frequently that constitute the main difficulty. As a difficulty it is a routine part of the job and one that can be handled by normal mechanisms and strategies of the school.

From ethnographic work on classrooms (eg Smith & Geoffrey 1968, Jackson 1968) it is evident that, because control problems arise as a normal feature of classroom interaction, the remedies used by teachers need to be fast-acting with an immediate effect. The decisions that are effective are seen as the ones that are (a) proximate, in the sense that they are geared to the circumstances most intimately connected with the classroom in question, and (b) instantaneous in the sense that they constitute immediate remedial action. Whilst, upon reflection, teachers might see the cause of disruptive behaviour as lying in the historical development of their role, cultural domination, family breakdown or the emotional disturbance of the pupil, for practical purposes control demands decisions that are orientated to the immediate circumstances and that offer some kind of immediate relief.

Contributions by ethnographers further make it clear that control is a negotiated phenomenon and not simply the unilateral imposition of a situation by one party (teachers) on the other (pupils). What Woods (1978,1979), Hargreaves (1978, 1979), Pollard (1980), Stebbins (1980) and Denscombe (1980 b) inter alia have clearly demonstrated is that control has to be negotiated and constantly achieved through interaction between teacher and pupils.

Such studies, emphasizing as they do the negotiated character of classroom control, make great play on the idea of teachers using 'strategic action' to accomplish the truce that passes for classroom control. There are a variety of ways of classifying such strategic action but one useful way is to distinguish between :

i) domination strategies : where teachers emphasize the disparity in power between themselves and pupils and try to impose control through an explicit use of this power relationship.

ii) classwork management strategies : where teachers invoke the imperatives of classwork as the rationale for control rather than rely on deference to their institutional authority, and

iii) co-operation strategies : where teachers attempt to incorporate the oppositional motives of pupils to entice pupils to become more or less committed to the order of events in class.

iv) strategic withdrawal : where teachers avoid control confrontations.

Such strategies are, in fact, interchangable to the extent that they provide teachers with alternative ways of coping with the same thing. Each kind of strategy effectively tries to routinize charisma and thus help those teachers - the vast majority - who have not got the personality to command the class on the strength of their own charisma. Rather than rely on charisma, the strategies appeal respectively to institutional authority/tradition, to the demands of classwork, and to the pupils' own interests as the source of legitimacy for control - i.e. factors that locate the demand for control outside the auspices of the individual teacher who requests it.

The widely used strategies available to teachers also share two other qualities. They aid control by reducing uncertainty and unpredictability in the lesson and they combine the appearance of control with an appearance of covering syllabus material. This tells us something else about teachers' perceptions of classroom control. It tells us first that teachers regard uncertainty and unpredictability as hazards to control which, though an inherent feature of classroom life, need to be contained and limited if control is going to be exercised. Second, it hints that though control is seen as fundamental to the practice of teaching, there is still considerable anxiety amongst teachers to be seen to be covering the content of the particular syllabus. In most cases, teachers do not lose sight of their avowed intent - to impart knowledge to the pupils.

There is still a vast amount of research necessary before any really sophisticated account of control strategies will emerge but ethnography has gone some way towards providing a rudimentary picture of teachers' and pupils' strategic negotiation of classroom control. What has been covered less fully, perhaps, are the sources of teacher (and pupil) understandings about classroom control. From the evidence that is available, however, some of which can be drawn from outside the work of ethnography, it appears that teachers understanding of the need to achieve control, and their perception of the strategies available to achieve it, also owe a great deal to their classroom experience. In face of a fairly weak socializing effect from professional training, what teachers feel about classroom control appears to stem from their

experience of classrooms whilst they themselves were pupils, from their classroom experience during initial teacher training and to the day to day reality of classroom life which they experience once employed. Put together, these experiences foster a 'Hidden Pedagogy' that is highly influential on teachers attitudes to classroom control.[7]

What teachers know and feel about classroom control, to follow the idea of the Hidden Pedagogy, is based on a sort of hegemonic 'common-sense' that permeates expectations about the job held by lay-men and practitioners alike - a common-sense that is learnt on site rather than required through education.

The substance of the Hidden Pedagogy, what it contains so far as teachers' perceptions of classroom control are concerned, normally revolves around two ideas : noise and autonomy. Under the prevailing circumstances in secondary schools, teachers appear to be particularly sensitive to noise in classrooms - especially noise created by pupils and noise that permeates the walls of the classroom to become audible to colleagues working in adjacent classrooms. Such noise contains an implicit threat to the teacher responsible for the classroom from which it emanates because it is easily identified as a symptom of a lack of control in the class. The noise provides a source of information about events behind the closed classroom doors and such information, in view of the paucity of alternative sources, tends to assume considerable significance because it can be used to infer whether or not control is being exercised (see Denscombe 1980a).

This explains why it is that teachers tend to recognize 'disruptive behaviour' primarily through the noise it entails. Without suggesting that teachers only recognize disruptive behaviour through the medium of noise, what is suggested by this is that, amongst the variety of pupil behaviours that might be deemed 'disruptive', it is the noisy disruptive behaviour that will be regarded as the most urgent and one that will receive priority treatment.

The symbolic value of quiet orderliness during lessons owes something to another facet of the Hidden Pedagogy of the closed classroom; teacher autonomy. Because teachers operate in circumstances that isolate them physically and visually from colleagues, and because they are generally expected to operate as individuals rather than teams, they have come to place great store by the degree of autonomy they have. The combined influence of 'classroom architecture', 'organisational delegation of responsibility' and the 'occupational culture of teachers' provide mutually reinforcing factors that stress the importance for teachers of gaining classroom control by themselves without assistance from colleagues.

Working under the conventional circumstances of the closed classroom, then, teachers appear to be sensitized to the idea that there are two prime threats to the impression of control that 'leaks' from their classroom : pupil initiated noise and the need to call on outside help to cope with matters in 'their own' lesson. We ought to acknowledge, of course, that this sensitivity is largely a response to the specific closed classroom context that characterizes secondary schooling in Britain and that where alternative contexts exist they are likely to

promote a different set of priorities in the minds of the teachers. Where teachers operate as teams, where they operate in open-plan classrooms even where they operate in gymnasiums, laboratories, art rooms and playing fields, the expectations about control might not be quite the same. There is nothing immutable about the sensitivity to noise and autonomy but they do appear to provide a prevalent and persistent concerns of teachers currently working in secondary education.[8]

This vision of classroom control is part of the Hidden Pedagogy that has proved remarkably durable - mainly because its genesis lies in classroom experience rather than pedagogic theory. Teachers arrive at training with fairly firmly established notions of what the job is all about and manage to resist the thrust of sociological, philosophical and psychological work that has a bearing on the job (Hogben & Petty 1979). Shortly after completing training and embarking on their careers as fully fledged teachers, their attitudes on matters connected with classroom control reveal little legacy of their tutor's wisdoms (Hoy 1969, Morrison & McIntyre 1967). Instead they appear to owe more to their common-sense versions based on their experience as pupils in the classroom and on the support such versions receive in practice in schools from the expectations of colleagues and the practical realities of classroom life as a teacher (Petty & Hogben 1980). Even during training, the denigration of theory and the exaltation of practice seem to reflect the trainees' assumption so far as classroom control is concerned and that what they need is practice, experience and confidence in achieving it. The main anxiety of trainees is not what <u>is</u> classroom control?, nor, even 'what methods are needed to achieve it?'. For them, the main anxiety appears to revolve around the <u>implementation</u> of the known methods towards the known goals - the experience and confidence of putting it into practice in the real-world setting.

This brief resume of what ethnography can contribute to our understanding of classroom control can serve some useful purposes. Initially, of course, it can be used to good effect in the context of teacher training courses:

i) it provides some detailed account of how control is exercised in practice by experienced members of staff,

ii) it tells us why, and how assumptions about classroom control are built into teacher culture,

iii) why trainees quite rationally prefer practice in classrooms to theory in the college lecture theatre and why they tend to resist the implications of sociology, psychology and philosophy, and

iv) why probationer teachers and those in their first few years of teaching soon forget any ideas of control picked-up during training that do not match the ideas of colleagues (and pupils) or the situational imperatives they confront in the classroom.

And, at this level, it can make a contribution to the issue of classroom control that is both unique and suited to discussions and decisions concerned with practice and policy.

In the first instance, it has something to say on the matter of cut-backs in teacher training. At a time where the simple equation 'fewer (secondary) children = fewer teachers = fewer training places' operates, it is worth emphasizing how ethnographic data might point to the need for the extension of the period of training of secondary teachers and thus to the maintenance of training provision for fewer teachers over a longer period of time.

The evidence, as we have already argued, indicates that a pre-occupation with classroom control limits the horizons of newcomers to the profession and dominates their interests to the detriment of how sociology, psychology and philosophy might have a bearing on the task. If the 'control anxiety' could be reduced perhaps there would be greater receptiveness to alternative visions of the job and an increased likelihood of innovative ideas being accepted by those at the chalk-face. Experienced teachers on in-service courses, for this reason, might prove a better source than the newcomer because the experienced teacher is less burdened with anxieties about basic survival in the classroom.

Trainees who do their teaching practice in open-plan classrooms or in team teaching situations would also appear likely to benefit from reduced control anxiety and evidence from research of Humanities teaching at Cedars, a community college in Leicestershire, would lend support on this point (Denscombe 1981). Similarly, the use of 'school based studies' instead of teaching practice might allow trainees increased opportunity to overcome a concern for survival and to start looking beyond the bounds of the immediate classroom situation for ideas and ispiration to guide their work as teachers.

More than anything, however, the ethnography of classrooms would suggest that training programmes need to be longer and intimately linked with practice in schools if the short-term impact of theories espoused at college are not to be wipedout by classroom experience and the control anxiety it engenders.

So far as the alleged 'crisis' of control is concerned, the ethnographic evidence that is available would suggest rather strongly that teachers themselves are not scared witless by the constant threat of assault and /or mayhem in the classroom. We know that there are situations where such a description would be apt but, for the occupation in general, the picture would be more accurately painted as one in which classroom control is a fundamental feature of the job of teaching - a feature that has always been problematic and which always demands constant vigilance on the part of the teacher. If is the implicit threats to teacher control, the minor infringements of rules, the begrudging co-operation or sullen resistance of pupils, which are more significant than the relatively rare assaults by pupils on teachers and the extremely rare riots.

All of this has a bearing on debates about the use of corporal punishment. In a nutshell it suggests that, unless corporal punishment is to be administered to those pupils who are unco-operative in the minor ways that teachers have to cope with day-in, day-out, it will have little consequence for the problem of control. It might well act as a deterrent to those pupils whose misdemeanous are slight and who would not wish to engage in open confrontation with the teacher. This would involve, however, a draconian, regressive step that few would advocate. But even the deterrent value of corporal punishment on those relatively rare cases of extremely disruptive pupils is itself open to doubt. The evidence would seem to suggest that corporal punishment has been, and will be, fairly ineffectual on those pupils who are precisely the biggest threat to a teacher's control. This can be seen, for instance, in Humphries' (1982) account of school life between 1889-1939 and Willis' (1977) account of the opposition of some working class boys to the regime of the school.

There is, in other words, little support from ethnographic studies of control in classrooms for the retention of corporal punishment as a necessity in the face of a 'crisis'

(a) because the crisis is something of a myth, and

(b) because it is more likely to meet the expectations of extremely disruptive pupils - and thus reinforce their disruptiveness - rather than to avert it.

Ethnographic research related to classroom control might also prove useful for helping trainee teachers to cope with disruptive pupils and threats to their control. As trainees are the first to acknowledge, they can use all the practice they can get in order to rehearse their strategies and perfect their techniques. The input from college courses can guide trainees by drawing on ethnographic research to illustrate the variety of strategies available to the teacher and the repercussions of their use. Such research, in a way, can allay some of the endemic anxiety of trainees about classroom control by considering the nature of classroom control, the factors that shape it and the normal/ rational basis for their anxiety about their ability to achieve it.

The description and analysis of existing classroom practices, along with its use to 'improve' teacher training programmes, faces a rather thorny problem, however, because at first glance this focus of attention, and the purpose to which the data is put, would seem to engulf ethnography within existing social relations. Because its focus is deliberately on a description and analysis of the existing situation rather than dynamics of change it is easy to dismiss the enterprise of ethnography as one that 'lacks a critical perspective' and one that 'reinforces

a blinkered vision of what is possible. As Apple (1979) suggests along these lines, such a depiction of the situation is far from ideologically neutral. And because the data can be used as the foundation for prescriptions to aid teachers' control of the classroom the thrust of any such research would seem to automatically bolster the social control function of both the teachers and those who train them. There are, in other words, two grounds for arguing that ethnography's unique and practical contribution to the issue of classroom control serves to perpetuate the status quo. First, it seems to concern static pictures rather than dynamic relations. Second, its use in teacher training only improves the effectiveness of the school as a social control mechanism and thereby serves the interests of the dominant minority.

Such allegations, however, need to be viewed with a certain scepticism. In the first instance, ethnographic accounts of classroom life rarely involve a static description of the situation without adding to that picture some analytic framework that 'locates' it within wider social relations and social forces. As Hammersley as reto-ted to this kind of allegation, far from 'neglecting the conditions in which, and constraints under which teachers work (...) this issue has been at the forefront of the ethnography of schooling for the past five years. (Hammersley 1981 p168.) Whilst it is certainly true that the major concern of ethnographers is to depict the members' understanding of a given situation, contemporary ethnography within the British sociology of education has hardly presented a decontextualized picture.
Contained in the accounts there is reference to the social circumstances within which the 'picture' is located which means that if there is any desire to change the picture, certain factors are clearly identified as crucial for the change. Indeed, it is interesting to note that when

they are identified they are treated in a way that actually lends itself to change in as much as the 'research does not treat those conditions and constraints as simply given, but rather, as themselves in need of explanation' (ibid).

The second allegation concerning the use to which such accounts can be put equally warrants a degree of scepticism. To argue that an ethnography of classroom control can be used to make social control more efficient without recognizing that it can also be used to sensitize teachers and trainees to the wider implications of their efforts to secure control seems, to say the least, somewhat partial. By [illegible]ating why control figures so prominently in the work of teachers, [illegible]eat-ing the way in which limited resources and architectural l[illegible] put pressure on them to operate in a certain fashion, the traine[illegible]cher might actually be spurred towards a critical stance on their practice and away from a passive acceptance of common-sense assumtions about the need for classroom control in the work of teaching. Obviously, the ethnographic data has the potential to be used in either fashion and the crucial factor is the way it is used by teacher trainers rather than any inherent quality of the data per se.

Bearing this in mind, it seems reasonable to suggest that, in the case of ethnography's contribution to the issue of classroom control, any accusation of conservative bias would be nullified where the use of ethnographic data to guide and help the practice of trainees was coupled with:

i) guidance on the social, legal and organisational genesis of the

need for classroom control,

ii) equal consideration of the pupils' methods and rationale for challenging teacher control, and

iii) attention to the contradictions within the dominant 'school' culture and an examination of their causes and their potential.

To digress slightly, it is interesting to speculate on whether these teacher trainers who espouse a critical Marxian perspective and criticise ethnography for its lack of radicalism actually provide their trainees with any guidance on how to achieve control in class. Do they assess the trainees' ability to achieve control or do they encourage their students teachers to abdicate control? Their answer, I suspect, would follow Apple's (1979) point that practice can best be influenced by 'critical awareness' about the role of education and educators in the ideological hegemony. From the ethnographers' standpoint, however, a real level of influence on the practice of teachers is more likely to stem from analysis rooted in classroom interaction.

Summary and conclusion

The main point of this paper has been to suggest that the findings of ethnographic research in schools can have definite implications for matters of social policy. To illustrate the point we have considered briefly the contribution of ethnography to our understanding of the problem of classroom control in schools.

The ethnographic account of classroom control, necessarily schematic as a result of the confines of a short paper, can nonetheless indicate that the idea of a current 'crisis' of control is rather difficult to sustain and, without denying that physical and verbal aggression by pupils

is a real problem, it stresses that such aggression is less important in the minds of teachers than the routine, minor threats to their control which occur far more frequently. Ethnography, in this sense, can clarify the nature of the problem. Indeed, in the case of classroom control, it goes further than this by actually providing information on the meaning of classroom control for the participants and by specifying the way control is recognised as existing or not existing by those at the chalk-face. It shows the importance of pupil-initiated noise and teacher independence as key factors used by teachers working in the conventional closed classroom for ganging whether or not a state of control exists in class.

Information like this can have a practical use in initial teacher training where the phenomenon of classroom, along with the teacher strategies and pupil counter-strategies to achieve it, can prepare newcomers to cope with a basic part of their job. Ethnography's contribution for initial teacher training, however, does not stop here. As we have seen, because it also shows how newcomers derive their knowledge about the job of teaching and how training has little long-term impact on teachers' attitudes to things like classroom control, it suggests that any successful impact on such attitudes will require changes in the nature of training programmes - particularly one-year P.G.C.E. courses. Ethnographic research, on fact, carries support for the idea of either a) extending the period of training or b) taking steps to alleviate the control anxiety of newcomers by providing more 'on site' tuition (in the form of School Based Studies) or induction via things like team teaching. Far from cutting back teacher training, this suggest that its effectiveness will be enhanced by extending its duration.

And finally there is the issue of corporal punishment. Here, as we argued, ethnographic data lends no support to these who would wish to retain it as a deterrent in face of crumbling discipline in school. The research that is of relevance basically questions the veracity of the idea of 'crumbling discipline' and, in any case, throws grave doubt on the effectiveness of corporal punishment as a deterrent to serious misconduct in schools.

Notes

1. See, also, Boyson (1975)

2. Dr. Rhodes Boyson is, after all, a junior Minister of Education in the current Conservative government.

3. For instance, Stebbins (1970), Hargreaves et al (1975), Woods (1977). See also Denscombe (1980a, 1981).

4. This is evident in recent texts on classroom control such as, Francis (1975), Gillham (ed.) (1981), Gnagey (1975, 1981), Haigh (ed)(1979), Marland (1975), Millman et al (1981), O'Leary & O'Leary (1977), Saunders (1979), Sloane (1976), and Tattum (1982).
   Docking's (1980) useful account, whilst recognizing the need to grapple with the question of how control is understood by teachers (chapter 3), does not actually take the matter as a central issue and, conseqently, does not actually take the matter very far or provide substantial answers.

5. As Docking (1980 p8) indicates, the national surveys by Lowenstein (1975) and the D.E.S in England and Wales during the 1970's and by Pack (1977) in Scotland could not control for variations in teacher perceptions of, and attitudes towards, violent or disruptive behaviour and could not, therefore, provide any objective index of trends in the incidence of such behaviour.

6. The estimate based on this research is a frequency rate of 0.10 per thousand.

7. These experiences, and related research findings both ethnographic and otherwise, are examined by Denscombe (1982).

8. See Denscombe (1981, 1982) for an elaboration on these points.

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